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THE MALECONTENT.

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A

LETTER

FROM

AN ASSOCIATOR *in K*

TO

FRANCIS PLOWDEN, Esq.

AUTHOR OF

'JURA ANGLORUM,' 'A HISTORY OF THE LAST  
TWENTY MONTHS,' AND 'A FRIENDLY AND CON-  
STITUTIONAL ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF GREAT  
BRITAIN.'

---

"A Patriot, Sir! why, Patriots spring up like mushrooms. I  
could raise fifty of them within four-and-twenty hours. I have  
raised many of them, Sir, in one night. It is but refusing to  
gratify an unreasonable, or insolent demand, and up starts, a  
Patriot."

Sir Robert Walpole's Speech, Sess. of Parl. 1740.  
Tind. Hist. vol. xx. p. 490.

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1794.

LETTER

FRANCIS R. G. WILSON, Esq.

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# LETTER

TO

FRANCIS PLOWDEN, Esq.

&c. &c. &c.

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SIR,

I HAVE read your *History of the last Twenty Months*; and I have experienced the greatest disappointment, and disgust. Who could have believed, that the Author of *Jura Anglorum* could be induced to employ his pen for the purpose of discrediting the cause he had so lately espoused, and of countenancing the mischiefs he had so zealously endeavoured to repress, and subdue? Who could have believed, that every thing which was extolled

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in the former work should so soon be made the cause of censure and complaint; that every thing which had been reprehended, and condemned, should at once be made the objects of admiration and applause? But so it is: Your book in defence of our excellent constitution against the prevailing cavils and sarcasms of the time, was published in May 1792. It should seem, as if the British constitution had survived to that moment, only to be pencilled by your hand, and then to pass away for ever; for your History, which commences with the date of the former publication, contains nothing but details, and observations, that represent the constitution to be in need of immediate reform and reparation; and that the kingdom is convulsed with real discontent for want of this reform.

This sudden change appears very extraordinary, and some cause ought to

to be alleged for it. You seem to suggest two principal causes, that are to be considered more than any others, as producing the discontents which you say prevail—One seems to be the writings of Mr. Burke; the other seems to be the Associations. For although you bestow due animadversions upon every measure of government during the period of your History, and run the round of the proclamations, the war, the prosecutions for libels, and infinite other topics; and although you give their due portion of correction to most of the persons in the ministry, and to many connected with them, yet you seem to recur to the names of Mr. Burke, and Mr. Reeves, more frequently than to any others; as if they were the commonplace topics of slander, when others failed, for persons who talk and write on your side of the question.

This performance, which you call a History, is in truth a bitter invective against the government, and an insidious attack upon our constitution ; it proceeds upon false facts, and abounds with false reasoning ; it is very much in the style of news-paper paragraphs ; to suit the title to the matter of the performance, you should change the word *History* into *Morning Chronicle*, and leave out four words from the motto, so that it may read, *Ne quid falsi dicere—non audeat*. When you have thus taken off the mask, the title will no longer belie the contents of the book.

When your *Jura Anglorum* came out, I was one among its purchasers ; but finding it to be written on the side which I maintain, and that it consisted chiefly of extracts from authors of established reputation, with whom I had been conversant, I laid aside the book, as promising no gratification to



curiosity, at that time ; but I considered it as bringing together very useful materials, to which I might, on some future occasion, be glad to resort for information. Little could I then suppose, that the first occasion to turn to this depositary of constitutional knowledge, should be furnished by the author himself. Finding your pretended History so unlike what I supposed your *Jura Anglorum*, I have turned over the latter volume, to discover what opinions you had before maintained respecting the subjects you now so strenuously press ; and find, as I expected, these two books are in direct opposition. In the one, the leading points of the constitution are displayed, the nature of them is examined by temperate discussion, and they are placed on that sure foundation, which is only to be obtained from historical deductions, and the examples of former times. The design is  
to

to show, that the present establishment deserves every support, which its best friends can give it ; and that the late attempts to cavil at it, should be repressed before they arrive at the head, and produce the evils, that have been witnessed in former times. In the other, we see nothing but a repetition of such pretended causes of discontent as have been feigned, and played off, over and over again, by the factious and disaffected of every description. This repetition is mixed with personal invective, aimed at the most distinguished characters ; and with importunate clamours against every measure of government taken in support of the constitution. The design seems to be, to give applause and encouragement to the enemies of the establishment, and to check the efforts of those, who would defend it against its foreign and domestic enemies. In one, we see the lawyer and  
 4 the

the historian; in the other, we see the disappointed retainer of a party, the captious intriguer and agitator; in one word, a Jacobin.

This is the conclusion I make upon comparing your two works. *You* will demur to this conclusion, and you will repeat, what you have thrown out in defence of yourself, that you steer a *middle course*; being as much averse to straining the powers of the monarchy on the one hand, as to unbinding the licentiousness of the democracy on the other: But these refinements have been too long practised not to be understood; persons who would take a large ground for finding fault, profess to pursue a *middle course* between different opinions, and so entitle themselves to fall foul of every thing both on the right and left. But it so happens, that you have precluded yourself from any such middle course, by the description you have given of yourself  
in



in your *Jura Anglorum*. There you say, that the nation is divided into those who are *content*, and those who are *not content*, with the present establishment. You place yourself among the contents; the tenor of your whole book maintains that sentiment; and you express that sentiment by the impressive words of the motto in the title: *Felices nimium, sua si bona norint, Anglicolæ*.

Among the *malecontents* are reckoned, according to your own theory, and distribution, not only the professed followers of Mr. Pain; but likewise those who, being *discontented* with the present establishment, wish parliament to be *reformed*; and for attaining that object, or something else, unite under the superfine names of, *Friends of the People, of the Liberty of the Press, Society for Constitutional Information, the London Corresponding Society*, and other imposing descriptions. Above all, the mem-



members of the Scotch *Convention*, now transported to Botany Bay, seemed condemned to be ranked with the class of your *malecontents*; and yet, in the present performance, you are continually at work to extol these praiseworthy societies, and personages; as if, forsooth, you were, in so doing, pursuing only a *middle course*, and not setting up the worst examples, and assisting to carry into execution the designs of Mr. Pain, and his most mischievous abettors.

You know, from your memory, that this contradiction in your two books exists, and is grossly palpable; but, for the sake of those who do not know your different complexions so well as you do yourself, I shall here insert an extract from the *Jura Anglo-rum*, p. 137.

“ Whatever divisions of parties have  
 “ existed in our country for these  
 “ three last centuries, whether be-  
 c “ tween

“ tween the retainers and reformers  
 “ of the old religion, between the  
 “ Church and the Presbytery, the  
 “ Round-heads and the Royalists, the  
 “ Whigs and the Tories, the Non-  
 “ jurors and the Revolutionists, the  
 “ original, efficient causes of the se-  
 “ veral divisions into party, have  
 “ ceased, or nearly disappeared, in  
 “ the variety and change of circum-  
 “ stances which the kingdom has  
 “ since experienced. Such (if any)  
 “ of these parties as still subsist, seem  
 “ rather to have received a mere no-  
 “ minal existence by hereditary de-  
 “ scent, than to retain any of their  
 “ constituent parts or fundamental  
 “ properties. The nation, in fact, at  
 “ present appears to me to be divided  
 “ into two parties only, which have  
 “ absorbed all the other; the *contents*  
 “ with the present establishment, and  
 “ the *non-contents*. The former far  
 “ exceed the latter in numbers; and,  
 “ from

“ from the nature of the division, the  
 “ majority must be actuated by a  
 “ more uniform principle than the  
 “ minority : For the approbation of  
 “ the particular constitution and go-  
 “ vernment, which the nation has re-  
 “ ceived from their ancestors, retains  
 “ the majority in one body ; whereas  
 “ the dislike of the whole, or part, of  
 “ the same constitution and govern-  
 “ ment ; the preference of any other,  
 “ than the established religion and  
 “ government ; the aversion from any  
 “ state or church establishment what-  
 “ ever ; the wishes and expectancies  
 “ of the indigent and distressed to  
 “ profit by a system of equalization,  
 “ the allurements of a scramble to  
 “ lust, avarice, and ambition ; the  
 “ personal envy, jealousy, hatred, in-  
 “ sult, injury, disappointment, or  
 “ losses of individuals, are amongst  
 “ the multifarious motives, reasons,  
 “ and inducements, which bring to-  
 “ gether a set of discordant indivi-



“ duals, who from the moment, and  
 “ by the terms of their engagement,  
 “ sacrifice their several heterogeneous  
 “ principles to the common-erected  
 “ standard of discontent : For in the  
 “ political, as well as in the physical  
 “ system, the most opposite ingre-  
 “ dients may, like vinegar and oil, be  
 “ so incorporated as to bear the ap-  
 “ pearance of a perfect coalition.  
 “ When, therefore, I shall in future  
 “ consider or speak of this opposite  
 “ party, which I shall in general call  
 “ the *minority*, I shall drop every idea  
 “ of the nature of their original com-  
 “ ponent parts, and distinguish them  
 “ only from their opponents by that  
 “ common quality, which constitutes  
 “ them a party of malecontents, in  
 “ opposition to the majority of the  
 “ community, who are happy under,  
 “ and therefore wish, and intend, to  
 “ preserve the present form of their  
 “ constitution and government.”

After



After this explicit declaration of what you were, and what you were not, in May 1792, *viz.* that you were one of the contents, and not one of the malecontents; we are very much puzzled to account for the sudden desertion you have since made to the latter party; and that you should break out into such open abjuration of your former faith, and, like a new convert, should at once proceed to a resentful and bitter persecution of your old associates.

A certain news-paper, which you are pleased to extol for being *instructive, learned, and truly constitutional*, has lately, among its other freaks, instructed and entertained the town with accounts of most extraordinary *convictions*, that had visited the minds of some great political men. This profane writer seems to insinuate, that the change of sentiment in these gentlemen was so sudden, and was followed so

im-

immediately by *great honours* and *emoluments*, that these benefits might be considered rather as the efficient causes, than the accidental consequences of having yielded to the conviction arising from public circumstances and reflection. You best know, whether the sudden and extraordinary change in your opinions and conduct is to be ascribed to a conviction arising from extrinsic causes like the former—I say *like* the former; for I will candidly admit, that they could not be precisely the same; for those who apostatize *into* the present *establishment*, if influenced at all by extrinsic considerations, usually yield to one or other of those just mentioned: But the *motives*, *reasons*, and *inducements* to those, who apostatize *out* of the present establishment, as you have done, are so many and various, that I have not courage to pin you down to any *one* of them. You have enumerated them in the passage above quoted from  
your

your first book, and I give you the choice of any, or as many as you are conscious belong to yourself.

Your title to a place among the *contents* does not rest upon this general declaration. There are to be found in your first book various discussions conveying a clear opinion against the reforms, to which you plainly assure us, in your second book, you are not disinclined. For instance; having said sufficient to refute or palliate the notion of property in boroughs, you go on to show, that such gradual additions have been made to the body of the legislature, as to constitute, at the present day, a more adequate representation than our ancestors enjoyed; you strongly inculcate from Mr. Justice Blackstone, the doctrine, that every member is a representative for the whole people; and, in order to obviate the complaints made against bribery and corruption, you show that



the great and incurable source of corruption is in the profligacy of the electors, and not of the elected; a reflection of all others the most forcible to cure us of any hope from the projects of universal representation; or of any reform, that is at all to increase the number of electors. But I will give your sentiments upon the adequacy of our present representation, and upon bribery, in your own words:

“ It is truly wonderful to consider  
 “ the delicate, and at the same time  
 “ effectual remedy, which our admirable constitution applies to this  
 “ real or apparent evil. As the nation grew more populous, more opulent, and, consequently, as individuals grew more intriguing and ambitious, the effects of popular elections became more hurtful to the sobriety, peace, and industry of the community; the multiplication of such elections was an evident  
 “ exten-



“ extension of the evil already felt  
 “ and complained of. Now, if it be  
 “ considered, that the number of re-  
 “ presentatives in parliament has been  
 “ more than doubled since Sir John  
 “ Fortescue rested our security for  
 “ none but good laws being enacted,  
 “ upon the number of members of  
 “ parliament, who *consented to them on*  
 “ *behalf of the community*; and that the  
 “ *population of the kingdom is certainly*  
 “ *not proportionably increased* since that  
 “ time, it will be reasonable to infer,  
 “ that as, including peers, there are  
 “ about eight hundred members of  
 “ parliament, *quorum assensu* the sta-  
 “ tutes are now formed, there can be  
 “ no deviation from the ancient con-  
 “ stitutional intention and spirit of  
 “ parliaments, unless the increase of  
 “ the numerical proportion of the re-  
 “ presentatives to the represented,  
 “ shall be thought a violation or abuse  
 “ of the constitution. In order, there-

“ fore, to do away every idea of un-  
 “ equal representation between two  
 “ boroughs very unequal in popula-  
 “ tion and opulence, from the moment  
 “ of the return of their respective  
 “ members, one becomes as much as  
 “ the other a representative for the  
 “ whole people, or community, of  
 “ Great Britain. ‘ Every member \*,  
 “ though chosen by one particular  
 “ district, when elected and returned,  
 “ serves for the whole realm: For the  
 “ end of his coming thither is not par-  
 “ ticular, but general; not barely to  
 “ advantage his constituents, but the  
 “ *commonwealth*; to advise his Majesty  
 “ (as appears from the writ of sum-  
 “ mons) *de communi consilio super ne-*  
 “ *gotiis quibusdam arduis et urgentibus,*  
 “ *regem, statum, et defensionem regni An-*  
 “ *glie et ecclesie Anglicanæ concernen-*  
 “ *tibus*; and therefore he is not bound,  
 “ like a deputy in the United Pro-

\* Black. Com. b. i. c. ii.

“ vinces,

“vinces, to consult with or take the  
 “advice of his constituents upon any  
 “particular point, unless he himself  
 “thinks it proper or prudent so to  
 “do.’

“Upon this principle, therefore, it  
 “must be allowed, that eight millions  
 “of individuals (supposing this to be  
 “the population of England) are  
 “more fully represented by 800 than  
 “by 300 representatives, or persons,  
 “consenting to the acts of the le-  
 “gislation. It is certain, that the  
 “practice of every human institution  
 “must, in some degree, fall short of  
 “the perfection of its theory : Bribery  
 “and corruption are old hackneyed  
 “themes of popular declamation ; and  
 “it will ever increase, and be louder,  
 “in proportion to the disappointment,  
 “envy, and malice of the discontented  
 “party. Less vociferous, and less  
 “frequent, would be the complaints  
 “against bribery, if the complainants

“ did but recollect that the root of  
 “ the evil lay less in the offer, than in  
 “ the acceptance of the bribe. It ar-  
 “ gues more corruption and depravity  
 “ in a district, to find a hundred men  
 “ ready to sacrifice their freedom and  
 “ integrity for a trifling bribe, than  
 “ to find one man impelled by his  
 “ ambition to offer it. No punish-  
 “ ment can be too severe upon those,  
 “ who hold out the bait to the multi-  
 “ tude ; but until the corrupt disposi-  
 “ tion of electors be rectified, they  
 “ will take care to render ineffectual  
 “ the most vigilant and rigorous laws  
 “ against the bribing offers of the  
 “ *elected*. Ill, therefore, does it be-  
 “ come those to complain of encroach-  
 “ ments upon the constitutional free-  
 “ dom of elections, whose voluntary  
 “ and reflexed corruption completes  
 “ the guilt of the act, by which the  
 “ constitution is so severely wounded.  
 “ I wish not to extenuate the guilt of  
 “ bribery,



“ bribery, nor shall I endeavour to  
 “ justify any design or attempt to de-  
 “ prive a voter of the freedom of his  
 “ choice ; but, as the evil is absolutely  
 “ effected by the elector, who, under  
 “ every circumstance of influence,  
 “ fear, hope, or temptation, actually  
 “ retains the freedom of his action,  
 “ and therefore of his election, I must  
 “ necessarily conclude, that the only  
 “ effectual prevention of the evil will  
 “ be the correction of the corrupt dis-  
 “ position of the electors; without  
 “ this, every attempt or exertion will  
 “ be futile and ineffectual.”

Who would believe, that the writer  
 of these reflections upon the practical  
 experience of popular representation,  
 could give into the opinion, that any  
 of the projected reforms would pro-  
 duce an improvement in the form of  
 our constitution ? And yet it is plain,  
 you now seem to entertain that opi-  
 nion ; nay, you have gone so far into  
 the

the delusion, and seem to pursue it with such Quixotism, that you believe all the political movements of the last twenty months were not intended for their declared objects, but were the machinations of a wicked confederacy to prevent the attaining of a reform in parliament. For this, were the people deluded into Associations, and for this did the minister make war: But thus it ever is, when men desert the ways of plain sense, and plain dealing. The strait road of investigation led you on to truth, and honourable distinction, in your *Jura Anglorum*; a desire to serve a purpose in your *History*, has involved you in contradictions and inconsistency, which you cannot reconcile by all your sophistry, or brave, with all your fury of attack. You are fallen most decidedly into that *minority* of malecontents, which you once thought so low in credit, and number, and which I think

think so still ; and you have only to console yourself, as well as you can, for the station you have lost, with a place at the upper table, in those virtuous Societies instituted for reforming all the world, but themselves.

The injurious reflections you make on Mr. Burke's conduct and writings, may be placed among your most distinguished inconsistencies. How could the prevalence of his writings be a reason for your taking the line of conduct you pursue in your History ? Nothing has appeared in print from that gentleman since the publication of the *Jura Anglorum*. In that work you cite, rely upon, and applaud several, or, I believe, all of the tracts, which you so much censure in your last book. You seem to feel the difficulty you had to encounter, and you have laboriously endeavoured, in the opening of your History, to show, that Mr. Burke and you differed in



many points that were discussed in the *Jura Anglorum*. But the very comparison, you there make with such parade, contributes to illustrate the observation I am now making. In the *Jura Anglorum*, you treat your adversary as a calm inquirer always does; it is in the language of discussion and argument: But in your History, you are unable to go over the same ground without heat, and asperity. You have given us several specimens of contrast between Mr. Burke's opinions and your own: I will favour you with a contrast between your own style of writing, when you were in a different temper, and had different prospects.

MR. PLOWDEN.

*Content.*

Some persons may also formerly have been prepossessed of the idea, that the Revolution was an act of necessity in the strictest moral sense, in which necessity can be taken, and that it should never furnish a pre-

MR. PLOWDEN.

*Malecontent.*

Who, without Mr. Burke's quick and fertile conception of necessities, and dim-sighted tardiness to discover an efficient consent in the people, can find out by what sort of necessity the nation passed over the issue-male, and



*Content.*  
precedent for any departure  
from what they had then  
settled for ever, &c. &c.  
*Jura*, p. 180.

*Malecontent.*  
and legal heir-apparent to  
the crown, even being Pro-  
testant? Was it an act of  
necessity to credit the story  
of the warming-pan? &c.  
*Hist.* p. 33.

I have produced this contrast be-  
cause it lay at hand, and I have not  
now time to ransack the History for  
stronger instances. Nobody can look  
through it, without surprise, to find  
how much study is employed to make  
repeated attacks upon this gentleman,  
and his writings; both which were  
treated with so much deference and  
respect in the *Jura Anglorum*.

One topic of attack on Mr. Burke is  
so *old*, and *hackneyed*, that it would  
have been more creditable to forego  
the advantage it might have offered  
you; but you had a better reason still  
for avoiding it; you have taken fre-  
quent occasion to exhibit the incon-  
sistencies to be found in Mr. Burke's  
different writings. It certainly does  
F happen

happen to political men, who too often write for a particular purpose, and on the spur of an occasion, to hazard things, that on another occasion may make against them. While you were a sober inquirer after truth, you were not in the way to incur these dilemmas; but since you have become a political writer, you have already run so deep into these voluntary engagements, that, I fear, your after-reckoning will take much longer time and trouble to settle, than the whole of Mr. Burke's political career. But it is the fatality of you politicians never to be warned by examples. You, for instance, will write, though the great advantage you are now taking of Mr. Burke, arises from his having written before you.

There is another consideration respecting Mr. Burke, which ought, I think, to have some little weight with a person of your religious persuasion.

Ac-

According to your own account of the transactions for obtaining relief for the Catholics in Ireland in the last sessions of parliament, you consider Mr. Burke's *Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe* as the leading measure, from which your brethren finally derived all their success. You also represent the agency of his son, fighting under the shield of the father, as another great means for promoting that work. These events were recent; the triumph attending them you notice, and participate in with great sympathy, and congratulation; but while you are profuse in expressions of gratitude, and praise, to the several gentlemen, who bore their share in the different scenes of this business, you pass over Mr. Burke's merit with less notice, than you do his demerit, and errors.

It was not only in Ireland, that your brethren of the Catholic persuasion received marks of confidence

from the legislature ; the Catholics in this kingdom have been recently admitted to a situation nearly equal to that of other Dissenters. I fear this new situation is not borne by you with so much meekness, as your former one. In the *Jura Anglorum*, you delivered your sentiments upon the condition of persons, who suffered any political exclusion on account of their religious opinions, with temper and force of reason ; you argued, as those would, who were preferring a PETITION *of right*. But since your brethren have obtained an indulgence, like that enjoyed by the Protestant Dissenters ; you, Sir, seem to have adopted all the restlessness, and fury, which those gentlemen have generally discovered in political questions : Your petition of right is now become a BILL *of Rights* ; the establishment, which before was to be preserved, is now to be reformed ; Associations for preserving  
it



it are wicked, and dangerous; Clubs and Conventions for undermining it, are constitutional and legal; the liberty of the press is infinitely more valuable, than the property of the purse; the *Jura Anglorum* are thrown into the fire; and the Morning Chronicle is, in your opinion, a truly constitutional paper.

I come now to notice the reflections you have been pleased to make on the Associations, and particularly on that, which gave rise to the others, and which for that reason is made the object of attack by the set of people with whom you appear now to consort. After the sneers and calumnies, that have been aimed at this Society by anonymous writers in news-papers; or, which is the same, by the supposed speeches of members of parliament, reported in news-papers, no stale repetitions from you can be worth refutation. What I shall say, Sir, on this

this head, will be for your correction, and not in defence of that Society.

Among the charges you make on this Association, you allege, they excited an alarm upon false pretences; that this was for the purpose of favouring some measure, that would wholly prevent, or postpone, any attempt at parliamentary reform. This is said, insinuated, or argued upon, as admitted, in various pages of your History. But I shall content myself with citing only the following :

“ Mr. Reeves’s Association had set  
 “ out upon the most false, wicked, and  
 “ dangerous grounds, that could be  
 “ devised. They boast of their being  
 “ formed into a Club for the express  
 “ purpose of preserving themselves  
 “ against *the horrid attempts of daring*  
 “ *and seditious men, who, under the spe-*  
 “ *cious pretence of reformation, wish to*  
 “ *subvert the constitution and government*  
 “ *of their country.* What can be more  
 “ false,

“ false, than that all those, who wish  
 “ to bring about a reform in parlia-  
 “ ment, wish to subvert the constitu-  
 “ tion of their country? What more  
 “ wicked, than thus to calumniate,  
 “ and criminate, their fellow-subjects,  
 “ who are peaceful, and loyal? What  
 “ more dangerous to the state, than  
 “ to establish such a system of enmity  
 “ among citizens, and fomenting it  
 “ by means obviously open to retalia-  
 “ tion, and immediately tending to  
 “ the horrid effects of irritation, re-  
 “ venge, and despair?”—p. 192.

Whoever reads this passage with  
 any confidence in the writer, will  
 suppose that the words here printed in  
 Italics, are a quotation from some de-  
 claration of the Association as to the  
 nature of their design; and so it  
 ought to be, in order to justify you  
 not only in this passage, but in many  
 others. I have not, however, been  
 able to find any such words, or any to  
 the



the like import, in any part of the proceedings of the Society ; on the contrary, I can aver, after a scrupulous perusal of their printed proceedings, that the word *reform*, or *reformation*, is not to be found in them ; and considering how much the pretence of reform was mixed with the sedition then at work, it is curious to observe how studious the Society was to avoid saying any thing, that could glance at an opinion either for or against reform. But the truth, which the Society were tender in proclaiming, has come out of the mouth of an unwary advocate: *You* are conscious of the truth, and you declare it. For myself, being bound by none of the delicacies which bound that Association, I do fully agree with you in believing, that the reforms now pretended, are only popular names for covering seditious designs.

But, if you pronounce the Association, in stigmatizing reform, to have  
pro-



proceeded on grounds that were false, and wicked; I beg you, if that charge upon the Association turns out to be false, to tell me, how wicked and dangerous are the grounds upon which you proceeded to charge them? I will not put you to any difficulty in answering this question; it is neither the one, nor the other: It is only the dash of a party writer, and hurts nobody but the author.

If the design of any persons, meeting for a public purpose, was plain and explicit, the design of this Association was so, as expressed in the proceedings of 30th Nov. 1792, which was, “ by the circulation of cheap publications, or otherwise, to cause  
 “ those topics of public discussion,  
 “ which have been lately perverted  
 “ by evil-designing men, to be explained; for undeceiving and informing those persons, who have  
 “ been misled and deluded by specious

“ cious reasonings, and false repre-  
 “ sentations; and to use their best  
 “ endeavours, in aid and support of  
 “ the civil magistrates, to discourage  
 “ and counteract all seditious publi-  
 “ cations, and attempts, to disturb the  
 “ peace of the kingdom.”

The plan for forming other Associations recommended by that Society, and now to be found among the *Association Papers*, Part I. No. 4. is of the same import. In truth, this Association proposed to itself nothing more, than to assist in preserving the laws and constitution, in the same manner, and in no other, as any individual in the kingdom might, if he pleased to exert himself with diligence and perseverance; and those, who were disposed to cabal for parliamentary reform, might, and actually did, and still do, pursue their favourite object, notwithstanding any *expressed or implied purpose* of this Society. But if  
 such

such caballers go to the length of combining and confederating (as in general they really do), in order to set on foot and promote designs of a more dangerous tendency, which are in their nature offences against the state, then they become objects of jealousy, and occasions for exertion to this and other Associations. And we ought to be very thankful, that so many patriotic persons have imposed on themselves the duty of watching for the safety of the state, when so many are plotting to undermine it.

It is therefore false and idle (for I will not retort upon you your own hard words) to talk of Mr. Reeves's Association laying down a *new doctrine*, that it was *illegal and unconstitutional* to meet for the purpose of considering and discussing the state of the popular representation. (p. 194.) They lay down no such doctrine, nor do they presume to lay down any doctrine at all,



all, except this, that the law is to be obeyed, and that they will endeavour to make it be so. It is from your friends, the reformers, that we are to look for new doctrines; it is the avowed profession of those, who have better lights than our forefathers; and your friends have, on other occasions, made it a reproach to this Association, that it set itself obstinately to maintain antiquated systems. If you are an advocate of reform, you must join in this reproach; and yet (p. 304.) you call the Association *constitution-mongers*. But it is endless to follow you through all the inconsistencies of this rhapsodical history.

But the doctrines of this Association are either too old, or too new, to please every body. You tell us (p. 194.) for you now speak as an historian, that “ so seriously were the most illi-  
 “ beral, scandalous, and unconstitu-  
 “ tional motives for holding these



“ Associations boasted of, and propagated, that Mr. Fox and Mr. Grey thought it necessary to notice them in the House.”

According to your account (p. 183—195.) this notice was, however, confined to a criticism on two passages contained in the popular Paper of THOMAS BULL, which is rendered almost as famous by the criticisms of those great orators, as by the eagerness, and approbation, with which it was universally read: Which of the two was the better judgment, I need not determine; but you, with your new politics, are bound to allow that, *interdum VULGUS rectum videt.*

You make the great orator say (p. 183.), “ that the doctrines published and circulated by the learned chairman, inculcated the *jure divino* right of kings, which would have been treasonable in the years 1715 and 1745;” and then recite a passage,

age, where the plain writer of that paper, whose reading may be supposed not to extend beyond the Bible, reminds his honest friend, that in the Bible, the king is called the Lord's anointed; and then dryly asks him, *if he ever heard of his having anointed a republic?* Surely a man must be strangely insensible to humour, and to the effects of character, and manners, to take offence at a trait like this, and what follows it, in that odd performance. To infer that the Society maintain that old-fashioned doctrine, because they reprinted this paper, is making a worse comedy than the paper itself; and it looks, as if the historian meant to banter the right honourable orator, rather than the learned chairman. I say the historian, because I never can depend upon the reports of what this or that person says in parliament; and of the two, the responsibility ought rather to rest  
on

on the ostensible person, which, in this case, is the historian.

But it appears beyond a doubt, that whether Mr. Fox said what you ascribe to him, or not; and whether he meant it seriously or not, you are serious in the imputation; for in another place (p. 303.) you say, “ the doctrine of “ Thomas Bull, which these leaguers “ adopt and inculcate, if it mean any “ thing, means, in the common and “ accepted terms of the English lan- “ guage, that the king of Great Bri- “ tain reigns over his people *jure* “ *divino*, or that he is immediately ap- “ pointed by God, and not by the “ law :” And then you wind up the tragedy with Sir Robert Filmer, and close the whole with a pun upon Mr. Locke.

Lest the wicked leaguers should be thought, by some persons, not answerable so strictly for writings, which they only reprint, as for their own  
com-

compositions, you lay it down broadly in another place, p. 299. (where you give yourself the trouble more particularly to review *the Association Papers*), that “ the republication of a work  
 “ written by an author of no mean  
 “ repute, evidently argues a more un-  
 “ equivocal and reflected approbation  
 “ of the doctrines contained in it,  
 “ than the first publication of a new  
 “ production.” I must say I am of another opinion ; but as you lay down this law for others, I suppose you mean to abide by it, if applied to yourself.

And here, I must again refer to the *Jura Anglorum*. In the chapter, where you give a history of the attempts and effects of *levellers* in this kingdom, you detail, under that denomination, the exertions and exploits of those reformers of the state, that are looked up to by your new friends with great veneration. Speaking of Charles I. retiring to Yorkshire (p. 591.), you  
 go



go on thus: “ And now, as HEYLIN  
 “ observes, comes Calvin’s doctrine,  
 “ for restraining the power of kings,  
 “ to be put in practice. From hence-  
 “ forth the very relation of sovereign  
 “ and subject seems to have ceased  
 “ between that party and the king.”

You mention the nineteen propositions  
 to the king, in which (as you say  
 from Heylin), “ among many other  
 “ insolent demands, they insisted that  
 “ the great officers of court and state,  
 “ the two chief justices, and chief baron,  
 “ should be nominated and approved  
 “ by both houses of parliament; that  
 “ all affairs of the kingdom should be  
 “ managed by them, even unto the  
 “ naming of a governor for his ma-  
 “ jesty’s children, and for disposing  
 “ them in marriage, at the will of the  
 “ houses; that no popish lord (as long  
 “ as he continued such) should vote  
 “ in parliament; and, amongst many  
 “ other things of like importance,

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“ that

“ that he would give consent to such  
 “ a reformation of church govern-  
 “ ment and liturgy, as both the houses  
 “ should advise. But he knew well  
 “ enough, that to grant all this was  
 “ plainly to divest himself of all regal  
 “ power, WHICH GOD HAD PUT INTO  
 “ HIS HANDS ; and therefore he re-  
 “ turned to them such an answer as  
 “ the necessity of his affairs, compared  
 “ with those impudent demands, did  
 “ suggest unto him.”

Surely the divine right of kings,  
 paramount to the reforming *will* of  
 their people, and that expressed by  
 parliament, is as plainly maintained in  
 the opinion of Heylin, as it is in that  
 of Thomas Bull. But if you are to be  
 charged with the adoption of this sen-  
 timent, by the same reasoning with  
 which you charge the Association, it  
 then remains to inquire, whether your  
 confederacy with this grave historian,  
 whose character was known, and who  
 was

was of no mean repute, for advancing high-flying doctrines, did not argue more reflected approbation of this position, than the Association's republication of Thomas Bull; the author of which was not known, the paper itself had not been born many days, and had, on a sudden, acquired a popular run and celebrity, not for having promoted this particular doctrine, but from the general tenor and complexion of the whole piece.

I refrain to add to this instance from Heylin, many other passages in the *Jura Anglorum*, which, upon the same reasoning, would fix you with responsibility for the opinions of others upon this very critical point. One from Bracton (p. 310.), *omnis quidem sub eo* (id est, sub rege) *et ipse sub nullo, nisi tantum sub Deo*, notwithstanding all your refinements upon the context, is of this sort,

You go on, as an historian, to relate further progress in criticising THOMAS BULL in the house of commons (p. 195.): “ One of the first publications made by Mr. Reeves, the arch-patriarch of these Associations, was” (said Mr. Grey on 17th Dec.) “ not only calculated to excite sedition, but absolutely pointed out the class of persons against whom the loyal fury of the mob should be directed. The extermination of the Dissenters was their aim; and the publication alluded to, asserted, *‘that the Presbyterians had been the cause of the disturbances in America; that by them the expences of the American war had been incurred; and that the Birmingham Doctor (Priestley) was more infamous even than Pain.’* Mr. Fox, on the same day, produced to the same house a circular invitation to one of these loyal Meetings at Staines, which ended  
“ with



“ with these words, *Destruction to*  
 “ *Mr. Fox, and his Jacobin Committee.*”

If Mr. Reeves should think it worth his while to retort this waggery, by calling you the *arch-historian*, you are not to understand that he means to style you the *chief* of historians, but merely a *cunning one*: That is, being a party writer, you have taken only so much of these stories as makes for your argument, and have left the remainder unnoticed. You ought to have informed your readers, how these unjust charges were answered, and explained; and if you were not possessed of the facts for so doing, you have as little qualification, as you seem to have disposition, to write like a true historian.

I will now remind you, that the passage in THOMAS BULL, respecting the Presbyterians, was expunged in the republication made by the Association. With all their wish to give a  
 more

more general circulation to this popular piece, they would not consent to give their sanction to a reflection upon a whole set of people. In all the copies which they caused to be printed, this passage was left out; and if you will be at the pains to look at the Association Papers, Part II. No. 1. you will there be able to verify what I say, at least as far as that evidence goes.

The Society had reason to feel uneasiness at such a calumny being cast upon them. It had been most scrupulously endeavoured by the Society, from the beginning (and they seem to have adhered to that resolution to the present moment), not to take part for or against any class or description of men whatsoever, in the church or the state, in place or out of place; they had nothing to support but the laws, and nothing to resist but those who broke them. How grieved must  
 2 they

they have been, when they found themselves, in spite of all the purity of their proceedings, likely to be placed, by misconstruction, upon a level with many political Societies, which are formed solely for upholding party views, and gratifying personal resentments! The difficulty they were under, was further increased by a restraint, which they seem to have imposed upon themselves (and from which they have never deviated), not to notice in their proceedings any thing, that passed in either house of parliament; a practice highly presumptuous; but one, in which popular Societies have permitted themselves too much licence. However, what they could not do as a body, they seemed to think they might very well allow themselves to cause to be done in another manner. There accordingly appeared in most of the public papers a full protestation of the  
 Society

Society against this imputation upon them \*; and there seems little reason

\* "The Association at the Crown and Anchor, having been unjustly charged in the news-papers with the publication of a libel against the Dissenters, in a paper entitled, "*One Pennyworth of Truth, from Thomas Bull to his Brother John,*" we are authorised to lay before the public the following state of facts :

"The paper above-mentioned, with all the expressions complained of as reflecting upon the Dissenters, had been published, and become much in demand, for some time before the institution of that Association. It was afterwards sent to the Crown and Anchor, with many pressing applications for the circulation of it, from the good impressions it had been found to produce in favour of the established constitution. Yielding to this recommendation, but at the same time anxious upon this, as they have been upon every occasion, to preserve the enlarged and liberal principles of their Association, by avoiding all reflections upon any description of men, political or religious, the Committee caused the paper to be reprinted and published, first taking care to expunge every sentence or expression that might any way tend to reflect on the Dissenters. In doing this they were enabled to gratify the public curiosity in favour of this paper, without mixing in it any thing that might be considered in the least offensive or injurious to that respectable body. This will appear by a comparison of the former edition of this paper with the one printed by the Society at the Crown and Anchor, now in general

cir.



to doubt, but that the explicit declaration then made, must have

circulation ; by which it will be seen, that every expression to which Mr. Grey is stated in the news-papers to have objected, is in this latter paper omitted. This was pointed out in the house of commons by Mr. Anstruther, Mr. Yorke, and other members. Mr. Grey's motion was negatived without a division.

“ From this statement the public will observe, that the part which the Society at the Crown and Anchor have taken in respect to the above-mentioned paper, has been to prevent, as far as lay in their power, the further circulation of those reflections upon the Dissenters, of which the Society have, in the news-papers, erroneously been stated to be the authors.

“ That Society was instituted with no design to aggrandize or depreciate any description or party of men in the kingdom, whether religious or political. They came forward to support the existing laws and constitution in a moment when the majority of good citizens, well affected to both, had taken serious alarm at the indefatigable industry with which the most dangerous and seditious doctrines had been daringly inculcated by enemies to the king and state. They have strictly adhered to the limit they originally prescribed to themselves. The occasion of the present explanation is one of the strongest testimonies that they do adhere to it; and it is certain that no party consideration will ever move them from the line of moderation, as well as of exertion, which they have laid down for their conduct.”

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done away the imputation most completely.

Such is the history of this transaction, which the Society considered as a great injury to their character. Nothing can be charged upon Mr. Grey, who might very well believe, that every copy of Thomas Bull was the same, and that they all came from this Society. But the reader of this will judge what title you have, as an historian, either to the praise of industry in research, or of fidelity in relating. I believe he will think the clause of *ne quid veri non audeat*, in your motto, has in it more of promise than performance.

Mr. Fox's story of the invitation-card, was as ill told by him in the house, as it is by you in your book ; if this had been a general card of invitation, it would, no doubt, have been printed ; but none such was seen by any body except himself, either printed,

ed, or written. If such a single card came to his hands, no doubt it was written, and the scandal of it should rest with the writer solely ; and after all, it is quite as likely to have been fabricated by an enemy to the cause, that it might afterwards be made a bad use of ; and it is more like a Jacobin trick for being contrived so as to deceive Mr. Fox, as well as the public. But this story of the card was, like the former, explained at the time by public advertisement, to which there was the testimony of a respectable baronet : So that you have here given us another specimen of your information, and fidelity, as an historian. News-papers are the very rolls and records for authenticating a recent period ; you ought to have availed yourself of any truth to be found in them : I am sure you have copied from them untruths without choice, or remorse ; and your style and whole



manner demonstrate that you have studied those inimitable models with much devotion.

You give yourself the trouble, in another place, to notice the collection made of the Tracts printed and circulated by the Society, and published all together in July 1793, under the title of *Association Papers* ; and upon that occasion you single out two pieces as objects of criticism : The first is Mr. Soame Jennings's *Thoughts on a Parliamentary Reform*, to which the Society have given a place among their publications ; the other is the Preface prefixed to the whole.

You seem to take more offence at the sentiments of Soame Jennings, than even those of Thomas Bull. You consider it as a great profanation to suppose, as that author does, that the parliament has always been, and ought ever to be, swayed by the influence of the subsisting administration ; and you  
express



express more alarm at this doctrine, that *human means* are expedient for governing the parliament, than at the former, which declared, that kings derive their power to govern at all, from *right divine*. You might have spared yourself not only the concern, which you express for the constitution, but the reproach to which you think the Society are open, for sanctioning such opinions. You need not have cited at length a passage from the *Jura Anglorum*, quoted from the *Lex Parliamentaria*, in which it is said, “ that nothing ought to be so dear  
 “ to the commons of Great Britain,  
 “ as a *free* parliament; that is, a house  
 “ of commons every way FREE, and  
 “ independent either of the lords or  
 “ ministry, &c.” p. 300. You cite these fine words to contrast them with the supposed profligacy of Mr. Soame Jennings; and hope thereby to show, how much sounder doctrines you maintain

tain than the Association. And yet, I believe, I shall be able to show, that you and the Association (if *they* are responsible for this opinion) do not differ so very widely.

In the first place, it was very proper for the author of the *Lex Parliamentaria*, who was writing a learned and legitimate discourse, to display the *theory* upon which the house of commons was founded; and in so doing, he was confined to stating *principles* only. Mr. Jennings, on the contrary, was writing a political Essay upon the practice and experience we had had of the house of commons in the exercise of its functions; and he was led, by the design of his essay, to speak more explicitly; as it furnished an argument to oppose to the wild speculations for reforming the parliament, which he had undertaken to combat: And if what he alleges was true in experience, that was a time, certainly,

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when

when he might venture to declare it.

But if this was a truth that ought not to be spoken; and if the Association have done great injury to the constitution in thus calumniating the house of commons, I beg you to tell me what the author of the *Jura Anglorum* can say for himself, who has ventured to speak a similar truth, and to an extent much more alarming, and this not in a practical tract, but in a theoretic work upon the principles of the constitution?

You, Sir, who give us such a high-sounding quotation upon the freedom and independence of the house of commons in p. 450. of the *Jura Anglorum*, had no scruple to insinuate in p. 446. that the body of *electors* through the kingdom are so corrupt, “as to be the primary cause of all the  
“bribery, which is made the *old back-*  
“*neyed* theme of declamation on po-  
pular



“pular occasions.” You even think that this corruption is to be excused, as the *practice* of every human institution must fall short of its *theory* (p. 446.) And in answer to your allegation, that the house of commons, in such circumstances, cannot be said to be *free*, I will answer, as you did, when the same reproach against the property in boroughs was to be answered; and I shall give your own words, only changing three of them, to adapt what you say of a candidate, and his voters, to the relation of a minister, and the house of commons: “Upon the presumptive force of such  
 “ motives are *ministers* very frequently,  
 “ though very improperly, said to  
 “ command the votes of a *house of*  
 “ *commons*; for no physical, nor moral,  
 “ much less any *legal* or constitutional  
 “ restraint or obligation of voting for  
 “ a particular minister, can by possi-  
 “ bility exist.” (p. 443.)

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I believe, Sir, you now begin to think, that I have answered, at least as far as regards yourself, the cavil at the practical observations of Mr. Jennings. This is a delicate subject to talk upon, whether we contemplate the situation of *electors* or *elected*. My private opinion is, that on no point of political inquiry, more than this, are we obliged to admit, that what is *theoretically* true, is found to be *practically* false. But I am not one, who feel much chagrin at this conviction. We went on with these helps to the time of Mr. Jennings, prosperously and well ; we have gone on, since his time to the present, with greater increase of prosperity : Indeed, I do not quite see, how it should be otherwise, when, upon looking closer into this matter, we discover, that bribery and corruption are only names given by the disappointed to causes and motives the most innocent, and commendable ;

and that those, who are not actuated by these inducements, become a prey to a numerous train of the worst companions, that can haunt the human mind. Those whom you call *contents*, and whom you admit (in a passage before quoted) to be the majority in and out of parliament, neither yourself, nor any one else, pretends to be corrupted, or bribed, by any other inducements, than honours or emoluments, present or future; nothing, sure, can more contribute to tranquillize and ennoble the mind, than such contemplations: But, on the other hand, the *malecontents*, or *minority* (you tell us in the same place), are corrupted and bribed by inducements of the worst kind: “ Ambition, avarice, envy, jealousy, hatred, insult, injury, disappointment, hopes of equalization of property, aversion from the state or church, dislike of the constitution :” These, and others, are recounted by  
you

you among the seductions, that blind the understanding, and pervert the will so much, as to raise a party, that will oppose the minister, as well when he is right, as when he is wrong.

Now, Sir, as all these motives are bad in themselves, are worse in their object, are very active in their operation, and are glossed over with the pretence of patriotism, and love of independence, I am very glad that there are some others, though not so numerous, so forcible, nor with so fine names, to oppose to them. It is very fortunate for the country, that there is something else than the suggestions of sound reason, and plain honesty, to purge off the ill humours of a malecontent, or, I believe, many would never be converted to a sober life. What I here deliver is drawn from your own principles when *content*; and I need look no where else for an answer to your cavils, and im-

portunity, now you are enlisted among the *malecontents*.

The praise you allow to the Preface placed at the head of the *Association Papers*, is no compliment when accompanied with the remarks you make on parts of it ; and it is wholly inconsistent with the tenor of your book, in every point, where the gentlemen, you allude to, are brought forward. (p. 296.)

You, Sir, are one of those who have justified the writer of that Preface in his expectation, that notwithstanding the explicit and full declaration there made by the Society itself, *the speculations and unceasing importunity of faction and party could not be quieted*. (Pref. p.4.) If you will not give credit to them, of whom you profess to deem so highly, you have no reason for believing me. I shall therefore pass on to examine some of your strictures on the nature and conduct of this Association, and  
on



on some other points, that have a relation to it.

It is perfectly incoherent, and unaccountable, for you to say, that the doctrines of Pain were less dangerous to the constitution, than those of the Association, or rather those of Thomas Bull, respecting the kingly power, and of Mr. Jennings respecting the conduct of the house of commons. This is said without sufficient recollection: For these doctrines are, at worst, only speculations; and the tendency of them is at least to preserve the constitution in the form, in which we now enjoy it. They may perhaps in theory, and upon argument, be disputable; but they are not likely to cause in practice any immediate shock to the welfare and peace of the country. On the contrary, the doctrines of Pain have no other object, than to create discontent against the present constitution, and to excite immediate resist-

resistance to the present government, in order to overturn it, and establish, what he pleases to think, a better. This experiment is at least hazardous, however promising the intended change may be ; and in the opinion of you and me, it is not only hazardous, but without any promise of mending our situation ; and therefore any attempt of that sort must be deemed by us to be wicked. How then, in your account and estimation, has Mr. Pain such superiority over the Association ?

But this is no more than the species of reasoning, to which you and your new friends are always resorting. You set up two or three speculative opinions for topics of argument, and in respect of those will pass over, with neglect, all the practical duties, that are most dear to society. You will debate, to a nausea of debating, *how* the kingly power is derived, *how* the  
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representation of the people should be adjusted and conducted ; but you will think nothing of disturbing the public peace, by breaking all the laws against sedition and treasonable attempts : Like those sceptics, who pursue, with endless scrutiny, the inexplicable mysteries of our religion, and never practise any of the religious duties, which are understood by the plainest man in the parish. Such curious talkers are rarely true Christians, and such squeamish theorists are rarely good subjects.

With as little justice can you apply to this Association, and those which followed its example, the remark that may very truly be made as a general remark upon a system of governing by Clubs and Societies (p. 305). I do most heartily join in reprobating such a system, as laying the foundation of confederations, that might in time overwhelm the legislative and executive

tive powers of the constitution. It was to *counteract* such attempts, that this Association was formed; they made their protest explicitly, and unequivocally, against the general principle, and put themselves upon their country, whether associating, as *they* did, for the purpose of counteracting a system of seditious Clubs, that were then rapidly increasing in number, and mischief, was not as commendable in good policy, as it was justifiable in law? The country manifested their concurrence and approbation, by forming, in all parts of the kingdom, similar Associations; all which have together raised a system of co-operation, which needs no other proof of its effect, than the rancour and aspersions, which the disaffected and seditious are ever casting upon the measure, and its authors.

But, I ask you, how is this a government by Clubs? What have they done,



done, that is illegal? What have they done, that is unconstitutional? Might not people join in bodies, by special compact, to do that which, by the general obligation of subjects, they were before individually liable to perform; to be in readiness to aid the magistrate, and form a *posse* to support the executive power? Was the constitution to be defended only by your book; and might not two or three thousand Associations be formed to defend it with their lives and fortunes? Can the constitution be too much beloved; can the kingdom be too much united; can the country be too well secured against its foes, at home and abroad?

The Associations will be distinguished among public occurrences, not less for the moderation in their demeanour, than the extensive and well-timed influence they had upon the public peace. In no period of our  
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history,

history, not at the Revolution, not in the Rebellion in 1715, nor in that in 1745, was there such a declaration of general consent and union.

Such success, however, had not the effect of elating the respectable Bodies which had united for a serious and toilsome work ; they were above mixing parade with their patriotic exertions ; they preferred no addresses to the throne ; no honours, no emoluments, have either been sought, or bestowed. There is not a person, who appears to have received, either at Whitehall or St. James's, any acknowledgment, or any notice whatsoever, in return for any thing done towards collecting and embodying this national testimony of attachment to the constitution ; there is every appearance that nobody was commissioned by the government to promote this measure ; and, I believe that, to the  
present

present moment, nobody has been thanked for it.

Such was the effect, and such the moderation and temper of the Associations; and there seems every reason to believe, that their conduct in labouring the task they voluntarily undertook, was equally correct and irreproachable. You talk of a system of espionage and prosecution, fostered and encouraged by the Association. This is not your own invention; and you disgrace yourself by borrowing it from disaffected news-papers. But although this general charge has been repeated, without shame or hesitation, where is the instance of any man unjustly prosecuted, of any man injured in his character or reputation to the slightest degree, by the suggestions or the activity of the Association, or any individual of it, or any supposed agent belonging to it? No instance has been named by you, or by any one;

and when we recollect, how much a certain party has been interested to fix upon this Society any thing that was censurable, we must, after the lapse of twelve months, regard its public character not merely as unsullied, and untouched, but as tried and proved in the fire.

The insinuation, that the Associations were raised by the procurements of Administration, was made by the Opposition; who seem unable to open their minds to any general object, but convert every thing into a personal attack upon the minister. So inflamed were they with the sentiment of animosity and pique against the minister, that they did not give themselves time to discern, what an error they committed, in confounding the friends to the constitution with the friends of the ministry; and proclaiming with their own voice, that the spirit and loyalty, and good sense,



of the whole kingdom, united in a determination to keep the present minister in place. What a humiliation must it have been to the unfortunate leader in this cry, to find, after all his protestations, himself, together with some of his chosen friends, obliged to conform and unite with these supporters of the minister, and take shelter in the Association of St. George's parish, to save himself from being utterly exploded !

But that gentleman seems fated to be on the wrong side of every public question, by some prevailing influence more controlling than the mere situation of an opposition leader. The first speech I heard this extraordinary man make in parliament, was an attack upon Lord George Germaine ; in which he laboured to show, that a name and character so *inauspicious* and *ill-starred* should not be trusted with the conduct of public affairs. These  
epithets

epithets were hurled at the noble lord so repeatedly, in so many ways, and often accompanied with others synonymous to them, that they have rooted themselves in my memory ; and I have from that time had in my mind an involuntary association between those epithets and the eloquent speaker, which has been since justified by most of the passages in his public conduct. Surely we have seen nothing, among public men, so *ill-starred* and so *inauspicious* as this gentleman ! Always in pursuit, and never attaining ; if successful, it is only to be repelled in the moment of triumph ; if he can worry ministers out, it is for others to occupy their places ; if he acquires the show of popularity, it is to forfeit it by some indiscretion ; flattering the filthy audience at a Covent-garden election, and yet stigmatized as an inveterate aristocrate. In the House, no one longer, and more eager in debate,

bate, whether in discharging his own part, or covering, with great generosity, those around him ; prodigal of every thing to gain and keep friends, and yet continually doing something, that makes it impossible for them to stay with him.

This gentleman has had grand occasions, when, by showing that he was actuated by public principles in his conduct, he might have retrieved himself, and regained the advantages he had lost. The occasion of the Associations was one of them, and one the most important. But in the midst of that agony, when every good man was trembling for his country, what did he do ? Why, he made a speech at the Whig Club, that outdid every extravagance he had before committed. I have before declared, that I give little credit to reports of speeches ; but if this speech was not actually made by him, there was opportunity  
and

and reason enough to disavow it : For nothing was more censured, nothing more discussed, nothing more circulated, with party diligence, than that speech. It was printed in seditious news-papers, it was republished by seditious booksellers ; and although one part of the narrative of the proceedings on that occasion, I mean the presence and approbation of the Duke of Portland, was sedulously denied, by paragraphs paid for in the newspapers, yet I never heard any one doubt, whether the speech and the rest of the narrative were authentic. On the contrary, they were openly, and triumphantly, proclaimed by the miserable remnant of the party to be so, and the noble duke's denial was sometimes questioned, and always treated with disdain. That speech was the beginning of a new crisis ; since which this gentleman has sunk lower and lower in the public opinion ;

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some of his oldest and best friends have fallen off from him ; those that remain, endeavour to raise his fallen reputation with expedients still worse than the evils to be removed. He and his party are no longer the Whigs, whether New or Old ; they are of a novel appearance, as yet without a name ; but they may be described as the party, to which the Morning Chronicle is devoted ; where their praises are blended with paragraphs, that revile the present establishment, and excite the minds of the people to discontent. They are reckoned upon by the seditious Clubs to go certain lengths with them in pursuing their objects, but who are then to be laid aside as Feuillants and Brissotins. I forbear to add any other characteristics ; the rest I may bring forward on some future occasion.

And yet, with all these failings, I never thought worse of this gentle-

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man,

man, than of a man void of any principle of public conduct. You will say there can be few things worse ; and I will readily agree, that he might have fared better, if his conduct had been influenced by fixed principles, that were actually bad. This want of an ascertained line of public conduct, has left him abandoned alternately to the impulse of a lively imagination, with great resources of intellect ; to the burst of passion, and the suggestions of the friends around him, whose situation however should rather have disposed them to receive, than to give advice. So circumstanced, this gentleman, during the whole of his career, has been an abundant talker with very little effect. He has been able to argue, because he had the gift of quick conception, the faculty to distinguish, and the talent of ready speech ; but he has rarely been able to reason, because he has rarely allowed himself

himself to consider a subject independent of some party, or personal relation, that has ever warped the discussion from its main design. He has shown himself rather a logician, and a speaker, than a politician. He seems prepared, and desirous, to speak upon any question, as an exercise of skill; he is ready to take either side, like a counsel for his fee; and the better to display his faculty, I believe, he would generally prefer the wrong side to the right. Talking only for victory, as a rhetorician, he says every thing that can make for the present argument, without weighing, as a statesman, the wisdom, or policy, of hazarding it. He is the speaking figure of the party to which he belongs; it is indispensable with them to keep such an instrument in their hands; and the seditious news-papers, and Clubs (as well as the *History of the last Twenty Months*), will not cease keeping up



this gentleman's spirits with unbounded flattery, while he can be useful to them. If such miserable trash can console him for wearing out the patience of the House of Cavendish, after all the endurance of so many years, I must think worse of him in private than public life ; to which I feel very unwilling to consent. He is, I understand, very much addicted to retirement and quiet life, which is seldom chosen but by those, who have a serenity of mind, and goodness of nature. We have had a strong argument, that in the recess, he secludes himself too much from public affairs ; for he seems to have come up to parliament, in December 1792, perfectly ignorant what were then the sentiments, and sensations, of the public. He confided absolutely in the brief put into his hand at the Whig Club. He was there told that the fashion for the winter was liberty and equality ;  
and



and he accordingly made that celebrated speech, as an opening of the new system.

Let us now examine the nature of those Societies, which you seem to consider as very praiseworthy, and as deserving encouragement, instead of discountenance. *The Friends of the People*, and *The Friends to the Freedom of the Press*, would prepossess us with specious names, if we had not been used to see such pretences held forth to cover the worst designs. *The Friends to Universal Peace*, *The Calm Observer*, *Peace and Union*, *Complaints of the Poor*, and many others, whether titles to Clubs, or to books, are prefixed to contents that are very opposite to the titles. These two worthy Societies are like the rest; and it would be extraordinary if they were not like one another, for they consist of almost the same individual members.

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The first of these Societies, who are *foi-disant, Friends of the People*; but who, since the people have declared themselves so pointedly against their proffered services, should, according to the French fashion, be called *Ex-Friends of the People*, may, if they please, *emigrate* to some country where Clubs govern the legislature, and where the mob assume the title of *The People*; they may there try the force of their heavy, inconclusive *Report* on the representation, their unavailing *Petition* for reform, signed by one person; and play over again their other popular tricks, till they are reformed out of doors by a worse set of men than themselves.

*The Friends to the Liberty of the Press* have come more into view than the other Society. Possessing a rhetorician of a similar cast to the one before described, whom they could thrust forward (though he needed no  
such

such encouragement) to stand the brunt and buffet of public animadversion, the party have played more of their game under this firm, than they ever hazarded under the other. The dinnering, and the toasting, and the speaking, and the singing, and the three times three, which constitute the employment and vocation of such Societies, were carried by this to their highest pitch ; they got so bad, that they were nick-named, *The Press Gang* ; and for shortness, I shall take the liberty in future to call these, *The Press Gang*, and the others, *The Ex-friends*.

You tell us of the *sensible, eloquent,* and *constitutional* speeches made at this Society ; but you act discreetly in not reciting them at length. I know a little of these speeches ; but with all their merits, I think, if some of their brilliant passages were new set among the plain words of an indictment, they



would not be so much applauded by twelve men before dinner, as they were by twelve hundred after dinner. As to Mr. Erskine's fine speeches; if they were not more *sensible* than his printed *Declaration*, they would be adduced by some people as testimonies to prove, what has been invidiously said of some great lawyers, that, however powerful they were in court, when they left it, they acted as if they had left their understandings behind them. But this, I must own, would be ill applied to Mr. Erskine's *Declaration*, except, indeed, we take into the account the indiscretion of undertaking at all, without a fee, to write on the wrong side of a question; for, as to the performance itself, it is, in my opinion, not more sophistical, weak, and ineffective, than many of his *Nisi Prius* speeches, which pass for good ones in causes that are so bad, as to disable most men, in the same situation,



ation, from saying any thing at all. I never saw any popular attempt so little likely to gain its object. It was too flimsy to impose upon those, who had any understanding, and yet too obscure to be comprehended by those who had none. In fact, it had no currency, or success; and I always thought the complete refutation, which Mr. Bowles threw away upon it in his *Short Answer*, was much more notice than it merited.

We cannot forget the manner in which this new Club originated. It begun upon one of those *multifarious motives*, which, you say, are the causes of men becoming *malecontent*. When I cite any speech, I beg I may not be understood as ascribing to the supposed speaker the sentiments given to him by the reporter. I am now going to refer to a speech declared in *The Oracle* to have been delivered by Mr. Erskine at Free-masons Tavern im-

mediately after the conviction of Pain. I remember, this speech was reported in the first person; which mode of reporting purports to convey the very words of the speaker, and not unfrequently, it has the friendly assistance of the speaker for so doing.

In this speech Mr. Erskine, *reeking* (not from a *Vestry-room*, but) from Guildhall, where his client had just been convicted, enters into an examination, and censure, of the verdict that had been given; reprobates the policy of the institution of special juries; promises that the whole shall be brought before the court of King's Bench, where the unjust verdict will be redressed; but if not, that it shall be redressed in the House of Lords. This was accompanied with much declamation upon the freedom of the press, which now, forsooth, was endangered, because his client was convicted of that gross libel, which you,  
 1 Sir,

Sir, censure the Administration for permitting to go unpunished so long (p. 174.) Though an appeal like this, made by an eminent advocate in a cause where he was counsel, from a verdict of a jury to a Tavern-meeting, might have induced some to suspect, that the learned gentleman had really left his understanding behind him in court, yet there were so many at that Meeting, who rarely carried their's about them, that all this fanfarade was received with unbounded applause ; and in order to give body to this active spirit, they resolved immediately to form the Society, which has been since termed, *The Press Gang*.

If, therefore, the *Oracle* reports true, this virtuous Society begun in an insult upon juries, and a reflection upon the administration of justice. These circumstances, in addition to the resentment for the conviction of

Pain (against whom you wrote a large book), must recommend them in a particular manner to *you*, as a lawyer and an historian; and it is not to be wondered, that you find them so very *sensible and constitutional*, and express so much tenderness for their reputation.

I do not know, whether you have changed your opinions long enough to have been present at any of the vociferous meetings of this Society, either as a member or a guest; if not, it will be worth your attention to be apprized of what you may otherwise be astonished to find there.

You should be informed, that there is a schism in this patriotic Society, which will ever disqualify them from uniting in any thing but eating, drinking, and making a noise. Even among these democrates, some of your before-mentioned causes of dissension prevail; and those at the upper table  
(where,



(where, no doubt, you will sit) are actually reproached as aristocrats by those at the lower. Mr. Horne Tooke is at the head of the latter class of patriots. It will grieve you to hear the bitter sarcasms cast upon such distinguished characters as Mr. Erskine, Mr. Sheridan, and Mr. Grey, by this determined enemy to corruption. He has told these gentlemen plainly, and to their faces, that they are suspected of playing only a game in these popular condescensions; and that their principal aim is to get into the enjoyment of those places and pensions, with which they reproach others. The most disastrous day for the upper table, was that, when he congratulated the friends of freedom on the confidence, which he then began to think might be reposed in the gentlemen at the upper table: "For," says he, "they now seem to have given up all hopes of getting into  
" office

“ office themselves, and therefore may  
 “ be regarded as fast friends to the  
 “ cause.” This was received with  
 much malicious applause, and congratulation, which disconcerted the gentlemen who were the objects of it, and spoiled the conviviality of the day.

These opinions of Mr. Horne Tooke are not among the singularities, in which the rest of the world do not agree with him. Plain-dealing is another singularity which distinguishes him from the patriots of the time. I consider this gentleman as a much honester, and a much less dangerous person, than any of those before mentioned. *He* means what he declares, which they do not. A consciousness of this, and the soreness from such attacks as those I have before mentioned, have made these gentlemen very bitter against Mr. Horne Tooke, and those who adhere to him; but  
 this

this is quarrelling with the only friends they have; for I can tell you, that three-fourths of *The Press Gang* are adherents to Mr. Horne Tooke, and entertain a very contemptible opinion of Mr. Erskine, Mr. Sheridan, and Mr. Grey. These two parties know, they are making use of one another at the present for their private ends. They both ardently hope for the time, when they may do without each other; the one looks for good offices; the other for a reform, that will give them the power, according to the language of *Thomas Bull*, to 'noint their old friends soundly.

The majority of *The Press Gang* are members of another Society, of which you make honourable mention; but which is so determined and explicit in its patriotic designs, that no characters so suspected as those of Messrs. Erskine, Sheridan, and Grey, would be allowed to show their faces there.

This



This is *The London Corresponding Society*.

This Society, for a long while, had no visible existence but in the printed papers it circulated, which, cautiously enough, were never dated from any place whatsoever. But this Society has lately held two open meetings, one in August, the last on 20th January; and it is now known, what sort of persons are engaged in approving and promoting the designs of this body of reformers. It seems, there are very few among them, who have the appearance of gentlemen; the most decent are middling tradesmen; many of them are artificers and working men, who think they do not disgrace the Society by coming with silk handkerchiefs about their necks to hide dirty shirts; and many of them are lads with their hair about their ears. This is the Society where some writers of the better sort of seditious

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pamphlets



pamphlets frequent. Some of the gentlemen, who have been convicted in Scotland for the affair of the Convention, were leading persons at this Society : Mr. Margarot, the president ; Mr. Skirving, Mr. Gerald, Mr. Yorke, *alias* Redhead, and others.

The avowed object of this Society is to obtain a parliamentary reform ; this is the utmost, which they venture openly to declare. Many persons, who may be thought to have no bad designs against the state, have professed to entertain the same wish ; and such persons, as well as yourself, take high offence, when it is alleged, that beginning to reform, would be only the signal to destroy and annihilate the constitution itself ; that most of those, who press for a parliamentary reform, use this as a mask to other designs ; and that they have no doubt of being able to accomplish those designs, as soon as a reform is made in the degree they propose.

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Whatever you, and others, may think, I aver this suggestion to be founded; and I aver the design of this Society to be of that sort. I know, that one of the persons above mentioned, who has written a plausible pamphlet, in which no such design appears, has avowed, over and over again, without disguise or scruple, that as soon as the house of commons was reformed, they should proceed with their other projects, *that went to taking away the lords and king*. I know, that one of the persons above mentioned told this Meeting, in a long and bitter speech, that he never went by Whitehall without pulling off his hat in thankful remembrance of the scene which passed there in the last century, and that he had repeated this mark of respect that very morning. I know this was received with applause. The same person represented Mr. Fox as an aristocrate, at the

the same time fixing to his name an epithet of the vilest import; that Mr. Fox and his associates *were not men for their work*; that Mr. Horne Tooke was even too backward, and cool, and should be watched; that even the Constitutional Society was to be suspected. When this gentleman had declared such potent means as these to be inadequate to the great work this Society had in hand, one is curious to know, whom or what he could approve, or propose, as deserving the confidence of this determined Society. He did certainly mention with high encomium some names, which are not worth repeating here; especially, as he, at the same time, inculcated most strenuously to his hearers, that not even these *true republicans* were to be trusted implicitly; that no man's virtues, however high, and tried, should induce a republican to repose much confidence in him: A sentiment,

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which



which is of the very essence of *Jacobinism*; and the application of which is seen in every step of the French Revolution, to which these people all look.

From these, and other traits, I am fully satisfied myself, that the leading speakers at least, and, I believe, the whole of the frequenters of these Meetings, are actuated by a determined hatred to the present *Establishment*, and seek to overturn it, and to set up a democracy of some sort in its place.

It seems, that they are not without great reliance on being able to realize this project; they certainly proceed with a boldness, that is not consistent with any fear of the law being executed against them. The resolution of their last meeting on 20th January 1794, and since printed and publicly distributed, shows, that this Society has gone to the length of holding a  
very



very high language to parliament, threatening to *watch it*, and if it shall proceed to exercise its functions in a way this Society does not approve, to call together a CONVENTION, for taking into consideration such disobedient conduct of the parliament; the mode and manner of which Convocation they seem to have already adjusted.

As this insult to the parliament, though committed in the midst of the metropolis, may not have come to the knowledge of persons, who do not sedulously watch the movements of sedition, I will here insert their audacious resolution in the words at length:

“ Resolved, That during the ensuing session of parliament, the General Committee of this Society do meet daily, for the purpose of watching the proceedings of parliament, and of the administration of the government of this country :

“ And

“ And that upon the first introduc-  
 “ tion of any bill, or motion, inimical  
 “ to the liberties of the people, such  
 “ as FOR LANDING FOREIGN TROOPS  
 “ IN GREAT BRITAIN OR IRELAND;  
 “ for suspending the HABEAS CORPUS  
 “ ACT; for proclaiming MARTIAL  
 “ LAW; OR FOR PREVENTING THE  
 “ PEOPLE *from* MEETING IN SOCIETIES  
 “ FOR CONSTITUTIONAL INFORMA-  
 “ TION; or any OTHER INNOVATION  
 “ of a similar nature; that, on any  
 “ of these contingencies, the General  
 “ Committee shall issue summonses  
 “ to the delegates of each division,  
 “ and also to the secretaries of the  
 “ different Societies affiliated and cor-  
 “ responding with this Society, forth-  
 “ with to call a GENERAL CONVEN-  
 “ TION of the PEOPLE, to be held at  
 “ such place, and in such manner, as  
 “ shall be specified in the summons,  
 “ for the purpose of taking such mea-  
 “ sures into their consideration.”

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The next day but one, the Society resolved, that one hundred thousand copies of the *Address to the People of Great Britain and Ireland* (to which the above resolution is subjoined) should be printed and distributed. The people of Great Britain and Ireland are addressed as *citizens*; and we are informed in the title, that *CITIZEN John Martin* was in the chair. This illustrious citizen is an attorney, who is employed for such of these agitators as happen to be indicted for sedition. In the last page of this publication, is a list of the toasts drank at the meeting, from which may easily be collected, what are the wishes and designs of these gentlemen.

It should be observed, that the carrying into execution of this resolution, is what the Society have most certainly in immediate prospect: For all the contingencies, upon which they propose to call this Convention, are the most likely to happen, and that  
soon;



soon; for foreign troops are already in the Isle of Wight; if the French land (and no doubt this Club will join them), the *Habeas Corpus Act* will be suspended, and martial law will be proclaimed. It is also to be hoped, an act will be passed, as has been already done in Ireland, for suppressing such Societies. As to the word Innovation, (these men to talk of innovation!) it is so large as, in the construction they will put on it, to comprehend any measure whatsoever taken for preserving the public peace: So that any resolution of vigour, which the present circumstances seem to make necessary, either immediately or very soon, is wholly interdicted to the parliament by a Club of very ordinary persons, met at the Globe Tavern; and a threat is added, that in case the parliament should violate this injunction, its functions shall be placed in other hands.



While I draw your attention to this resolution, I make no remark upon *The Address to the People of Great Britain*, which is full of many inflammatory suggestions, likely to excite the minds of the ignorant and ill-disposed to discontent and sedition. I recommend to you, and to those, who doubt of the insurrections that were plotted last year, and the secret designs that have been planning for many months, and are now carrying on, to subvert the constitution, and make this country a scene of revolutionary confusion like France, to read this paper. It may be purchased, with others of the same tendency, at the seditious pamphlet-shops in this town, either at Eaton's, or Ridgeway's; who, notwithstanding they are themselves in prison for offences of this sort, carry on this traffic by means of their wives and daughters; who, I suppose, are considered either as above, or below,

low, the law, upon which we rely for preserving the public peace.

We see what is the spirit and temper of this Society, which is the focus of all the Jacobin Societies in the kingdom. We may be assured, that those *affiliated* to it, are worthy of the parental stock ; and the numbers they embrace may be somewhat estimated from the number of the copies of their Address, which they have ordered to be printed ; a number, which leaves very far behind it, the puny attempt at circulation made by *The Press Gang*, when they printed their *Declaration*. But the Press Gang are only imitators, and of a late date ; they have not had one *affiliated* Society to support their fame, or follow their example. The leaders in it, who expected to make a party, as well as raise a popular cry, have been disappointed in both ; they have been outvoted, and outbawled, by the very set, whom they looked to  
for

for friends, and followers; but who were in reality the adherents of the lower Jacobin Societies, and came amongst the institutors of the Press Gang only to see, whether in them they had acquired some new proselytes. They soon found they had not, and revolted; the aristocratic leaders were disgusted at their own failure; the Meeting did not answer; and, I believe, it is now wholly relinquished. In the mean time, the Jacobins *file off* to *The London Corresponding Society*, and its *affiliated* branches, where, at present, reside all the sedition and mischief so justly dreaded.

Such are the laudable Societies, which you think should be permitted to proceed with their projects for reforming the state; and such are the men whom you contrast with the Associators, and for whose sakes you are profuse in loading the latter with every species of reproach. Do you recollect

upon whom you throw this reproach? It is not alone upon the Association at the Crown and Anchor, but upon all those who have followed their example. If I call them a majority of the kingdom, I do not name a hundredth part of their worth: They were the most distinguished of every rank and description; those elevated by birth, and those who had elevated themselves by their merits; the illustrious, and the rich; the man of estate, and the man of a profession; the clergy, and the laity; the merchant, and the farmer; the tradesman, and the artificer; the labourer, and the servant, who earn their daily bread under the protection of a law of liberty; every thing that was good, and great, that had virtue and energy to resist oppression, and hazard life, for what alone makes life valuable; such were the body of Associators, whom you endeavour to calumniate.

But



But what are the Societies which you view with so favourable an eye? They consist of two sets of persons; those who have fallen below party connexion, and in their present need seek to sustain themselves by any base support that may offer; and those, who, having forced themselves from obscurity by their daring attempts, are deemed, for a time, worthy the honour of affording that base support; a motley mixture, for a while kept together by hypocrisy and low condescension; suspecting and hating one another, and both abhorred by all good men. The worst of them are forfeit to the law, which threatens them with pillory and prison; the best of them, by the countenance and encouragement they give to such offenders, commit misprisions, that are punished by reprobation, and contempt. Dishonour and shame, fines and imprisonment, penalties and

transportation, pursue them for their misdeeds against the repose and happiness of their countrymen: These are the persons, whose character and conduct you set up against those of the Associators. You have made a fortunate judgment; I hope you will find great consolation among your new friends: *Habitent tecum, et sint pectore in isto.*

Having thus brought you better acquainted with your new friends, I shall proceed to another head of complaint, which you so strongly urge in your History; I mean the prosecutions for Libels; the guilt of which you are resolved to impute to the Association. But on this, as on other occasions, you bestow many hard words upon very few, and very undeserving, facts.

You tell us, that in the month of January 1792, there was a *regenerated severity, which had disappeared with the*  
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*memorable Jefferies in the last century.* (p. 199.) The name of Jefferies has become proverbial in a certain sense; and here it amounts to a very heavy accusation against the administration of justice. I wonder you did not consider, whether possibly this reflection might not give umbrage to his majesty's attorney-general, whose criticisms are not so easily answered as yours. Some of this *regenerated severity* must surely be ascribed to the court of King's Bench, where prosecutions for libels and sedition more frequently show themselves; and every blame of this sort must fall upon a noble lord, of whom you once had a very high opinion, if we are to judge from the terms in which you have dedicated to him your *Jura Anglorum*. Next to the court of King's Bench, the magistrates at the different sessions must come in for a share of this reflection; for there have been lately  
more

more prosecutions of this sort confided to the good sense of justices of the peace, than ever were before : So that there must, according to your account, be many more *Jefferies's*, and much more *regeneration of severity*, than appears at first sight.

But what do you lay before the reader as instances of this terrible abuse of justice? Namely, a sentence of six months imprisonment upon a man, for sticking up a most inflammatory posting-bill; and a sentence of three months imprisonment upon a Scotchman, for uttering seditious, or, as you are pleased (like a lawyer) to call them, *treasonable*, words against the king. (p. 199.)

You go on to tell us, “ that the  
 “ punishment of such low and insig-  
 “ nificant individuals would scarcely  
 “ support the system of criminating  
 “ every wish for a parliamentary re-  
 “ form.” I am satisfied they were  
 not



not meant for that purpose, and therefore did not fail of their object. But do they support your charge of severity, for which purpose you introduced them in this place? You say, “ Confidence was to be withdrawn from  
 “ men of brilliant talents, and tried  
 “ patriotism, whose zeal for the per-  
 “ fection of the constitution prevented  
 “ them from abandoning even the  
 “ hopes of correcting its few defects.” These are more fine words, that are to end in nothing. Who would suppose, that this stately introduction would conclude with acquainting us, that Erskine and Pigott were turned out, and that Graham and Anstruther were placed, as you term it, in their lieu?

Such daubing as this must draw ridicule upon more brilliant talents than these gentlemen possess. I beg you will inform your readers, whether, by *tried patriotism*, you mean that these

gentlemen ever did any one thing, by which they have benefited their country? They are, to be sure, making a fortune out of those, who are rich enough to throw away upon them large fees; and if these gentlemen should be seduced to lend themselves, to abet and countenance the present clamour made *for* (not *by*) the *poor* against the *rich*, though this may be a trial of their gratitude, it will not, in my opinion, be an instance of *tried patriotism*. But, to all appearance, the *zeal* of these gentlemen is not so much directed to *correcting a few defects in our constitution*, as to discharging the many duties laid upon them by their employers; and, I will answer for them, that in thus taking care of the private interests of themselves, and their clients, they will, without designing it, do more public good to their country, than if they set to work to correct the aforesaid defects,

defects, or to do any other act or acts of public spirit, or tried patriotism, in any manner whatsoever. There is no passage of your History, in which you appear to me to have more failed than in this. The conceit and falsehood about *regenerated severity*, *tried patriotism*, and *reform of parliament*, are the sort of trash that is bought at Eaton's and Spence's, by poor people, who believe every thing which they think seditious; but nobody, who can lay out six shillings upon your book, is of a stamp to feel any other sentiment upon reading this, than that of extreme contempt for the author.

The resentment you express upon the sentence against Messrs. Muir and Palmer (p. 369.) is not more in unison with the feelings of the public; and the facts you allege, are all false. It is not true, that “ the amiable qualities of the individuals, who were “ condemned, excited a general sym-



“ pathy for their sufferings.” It rarely happens, that the qualities of persons, who have so much courage as to preach resistance to the established government, are of the amiable kind ; and if these gentlemen had any good qualities at all, it is certain, their offence must have very strongly impressed that part of the public, who have condescended to think about them ; for I have never heard a person allege any one virtue belonging to them in extenuation of their punishment ; on the contrary, the sentence has been received with approbation, or silent acquiescence, by the public in general ; who seem to wish it was the law of England, as well as of Scotland, that persons, who are dissatisfied with the constitution of the country, should be sent out of it. The few individuals, who have moved in this business, have perhaps sympathized with you more than with the pri-



prisoners; intending by the stir they made, rather to draw notice upon themselves, than alleviate the *sufferings of the prisoners*.

A less mischievous enthusiast than yourself, ascribed every misadventure that thwarted him, to the machinations of certain magicians, who had combined to change the course of nature, in order to disappoint and prevent the noble designs he had formed, *of righting every thing that was wrong*. You think, that whatever is done by the ministry, by the courts of justice, by the Associations, is to prevent a reform of parliament; and you are so blinded by your fantasy, as to believe all the world (except the above description of magicians) are of your mind. But believe me, Sir Knight, you are in this wholly mistaken. It is not true, that there is a *general predilection for the opinions upon parliamentary reform* (p. 369.); but there is, on the

the contrary, a general disposition against such a reform, and a very general persuasion, that most of those who talk of it, mean something worse; these gentlemen, therefore, are not, as you assume, generally *looked upon as MARTYRS to these opinions*, but as justly punished for seditious attempts to destroy the government.

As to *the discussions which, you say, are provoked upon the question*, they have since been determined by the votes of both Houses, in the way all honest men wished, and foresaw; and to close the whole, the misguided subjects of this story are on their voyage to Botany Bay, where they may learn the value of a free and mild government, by the loss of it; and if they make, in that place, any essays to spread their opinions, they will be sent into the woods, to realize, in a state of nature, those ideas of the origin of Society, upon which they raised

raised such unwise and such unmanageable speculations, before they knew any thing of the practice.

The triumph you enjoy upon the acquittal (as you think it) of Hamilton Rowan in Scotland, has since, no doubt, been a little damped by the conviction and sentence of imprisonment passed upon that gentleman in Ireland. Persons cannot expect to commit crimes in every part of the king's dominions, without meeting with their deserts in some. Though this missionary of sedition escaped the courts in Scotland, we had the satisfaction to see almost all the Englishmen, who went thither, brought to the punishment which they had long deserved in England, without suffering it. Since these transactions in Scotland, it is surely evident enough, that the law of England, with all your supposed system of *espionage, and persecution, and regenerated*



*rated severity*, is not so hard, as some others, upon the friends of liberty.

The temptations to migrate to Scotland have never been great ; and since this unsuccessful experiment at a Convention, I do not think, that the practice of sedition will drain off any of our refuse patriots into that kingdom ; on the contrary, I am afraid, that besides our own patriots being returned upon our hands, we shall have native ones of that country seeking shelter under the mild laws, as well as the mild sky, of the South. We have ever held out more invitations to gentlemen of that part of the island, than they have to us : I would rather add to former inducements to emigrate any other than this bounty, arising out of the comparison of the laws of sedition in the two countries.

The editors of the *Morning Chronicle* are said to be Scotchmen ; and the next subject for your triumph, is the



the justice that was done for these gentlemen, by *the good sense, uprightness, and firmness of an ENGLISH Jury*. You take a particular interest in the vindication of this paper, and you call it *instructive, learned, and truly constitutional*.

I have read that paper pretty constantly, and perhaps with as much attention as yourself; and, I must say, it has never appeared to me to deserve any other character, than that of a determined enemy to the king and the constitution, and a devoted partizan of France; every order and rank in our constitution, whether of the state or the church, are the constant themes of scoff and revilement in that publication; this is carried on with such bitterness and such repeated attack, that I will venture to say, three days out of the six in every week, for the last twenty months, this paper has merited the animadversion of the law.

With all this career of abuse and sedition, you are still true in saying, that this was the first prosecution against the proprietors ; but after the observation I have made, you will believe I do not expect it will be the last. The observations on the king's manifesto—the remarks on the corruption of the house of commons—the piece intitled *Theatre de la Nation*, among others, occur to me, as crying loudly for the notice of the attorney-general ; but these things are borne, and the authors escape with impunity ; and you add to the insult which the public has already sustained, by reproaching the administration of justice with *re-generated severity* !

The resolutions of the Derby Society (the libel for which the proprietors were prosecuted) contained, in a small compass, the essence of all the seditious topics that have been lately so much declaimed upon. It is doubtful,

ful, whether any such Society actually existed ; and the device of an advertisement was considered only as a pretence for venting opinions in opposition to the Associations, that were at that time (December 1792) rising up every where. This was the general persuasion ; and what you say of its being *a bare insertion, without any comment*, never entered into any body's head as a ground of extenuation, except with those who are curious at catching any pretence to extenuate sedition.

You may be assured, Sir, that this English jury, if they could have given their verdict by a majority of voices, as in Scotland, would certainly have convicted your patriotic friends. The contest among the jurors, like other secrets, has found its way into public conversation. It is notorious, and talked of without the least scruple, that when the jury went first to Lord



Kenyon, eight of them were for convicting, and four for acquitting; the verdict then delivered, *guilty of publishing, but with no malicious intent*, was yielded to by the eight, because the four would come into nothing else. When this verdict was refused, and the jury were sent back to fight the battle over again among themselves, the resistance of those who were for acquitting appeared so unreasonable, that two fell off from them, and the minority were reduced to two; but so obstinate were these two in adhering to their resolution, that the ten finding themselves exhausted with arguing, and fasting, and watching, agreed at four o'clock in the morning to do that, which must be done by one side, and which they did not hope from the candour, or modesty, of the other: The ten gave up their opinion to the two; and in that manner, and in no other manner, were the proprietors

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acquitted. I will say nothing upon the characters of these two men; they were, no doubt, actuated by strong feeling to support them through so long and so unequal a struggle with their companions; if they have not yet been rewarded for the obstinate fight they made, no doubt they will have the benefit of the precedent, if they should become defendants: They have nothing to do, but, in like manner, to get some able-bodied men among *their* friends to put themselves in the way of being taken as *tales* men, and then the same game may be played over again: One obstinate juryman, who has no conscience, or shame, may always command a verdict.

After this story, you will be pleased to consider your own verdict on the merits of these twelve men; and I beg you not to bestow such praises upon them in a lump, as on one unanimous body (though the law, for  
wise

wise purposes, considers them so), but to distinguish between them, and then to distribute according to the respective claims of the individual good men and true, the praises of *good sense, uprightness, and firmness.*

You could not enjoy the triumph of the Morning Chronicle to the full, without indulging your spleen against Mr. Reeves and the Association. “ The  
 “ spirit of information and prosecu-  
 “ tion, which had been blown into  
 “ such an unconstitutional flame by  
 “ Mr. Reeves’s Associators, received a  
 “ most powerful and timely check ”  
 by this acquittal (p. 370). Besides the malice of this reflection, you seem to aim at something else: It is the sagacious historian, who combines circumstances, studies their relations, and points out causes and effects. But all this will not pass upon cotemporary readers; they require you to say, in point of fact, what sort of measures,  
 or

or conduct, which prevailed up to that time, did at that time cease and discontinue? And they are able to answer the question themselves, that there was none at all; there was no apparent check; things went on after, as they did before; there was no cause and effect but in the brains of the historian.

I dare say, you have as good authority for asserting, " that Mr. Reeves  
 " was a very anxious attendant upon  
 " this trial, and was heard in court to  
 " have declared, that no defeat of the  
 " combined armies, no loss of fleets,  
 " could be so prejudicial to the system  
 " of this Association, as the acquittal  
 " of the defendants." (p. 371.) Pity  
 had it been, that any thing so curious,  
 and so characteristic, should not be  
 recorded in your genuine History. If  
 you received this anecdote from any  
*anonymous* authority, perhaps you are  
 fully justified in making use of it  
 against



against that gentleman, who is censured by your friends for having taken away many a patriot's character, upon the information of anonymous correspondents. Such base instruments become sanctified in the hands of reformers and republicans. The best thing that can happen to your friends is, that every account given of them to Mr. Reeves may be as incoherent and improbable as this; and he will not, if we may judge from what is passed, bring *them* to shame by sending it to the secretary of state, nor *himself* by sending it to the printer.

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THE printer had proceeded thus far in doing his part towards this performance, when I opened a treaty with the bookseller for the publication; but I had the mortification to be informed, that your book and yourself were so little the objects  
of



of public attention, that a bookseller of prudence could not risk any thing in the adventure, and I must take it all upon myself. I had not recovered from this disappointment, when I saw in that truly *learned and constitutional paper*, the Morning Chronicle, an advertisement announcing, " A Friendly  
 " and Constitutional Address to the  
 " People of Great Britain, by Francis  
 " Plowden, LL. D. of Gray's-inn,  
 " Conveyancer; Author of *Jura An-*  
 " *glorum*, The Short History of the Bri-  
 " tish Empire during the last Twenty  
 " Months, &c." I immediately made a purchase of this shilling pamphlet; and I shall now add a few words that are suggested by the perusal of it.

What I shall add will be short; for this pamphlet contains nothing new: The principal topics are, the war and the Associations, Mr. Burke and Mr. Reeves: These are treated sometimes in the same words, always in the same

manner, and upon the same principles as in the History. Indeed, I cannot see what was proposed by this new publication, unless it was to provoke, by a repetition, such an answer and notice, as you had failed to excite by your first assault; or else to catch those, who might lay out a shilling upon this, but declined throwing away six upon the former book. If these sentiments continue to prevail, we may expect to see some future pamphlet from your pen lie upon Mr. Eaton's counter, to be sold for two-pence, along with *Hog's-wash*, *The Village Association*, and other works equally constitutional.

You labour in this, as much as in the former work, to show that your dissent from Mr. Burke's principles is no more than you had declared in the *Jura Anglorum*; and you persist in maintaining, that the British constitution is founded on a democratic basis, *the free will and consent of a free*  
 peo-

*people*, in opposition to the sentiments of that gentleman, who declares, that the democratic and aristocratic parts of the constitution are founded upon the crown, as their essential basis—from *the crown do they originate, and by the energy of that main spring must they be set in action.* (p. 20, 21.)

Whatever you and other theorists may allege in support of your system, Mr. Burke is certainly right in point of fact; for any one, who is acquainted with the law and history of his country, knows, that there was a king and council of great men, who ruled the country for centuries before the commons had any voice; and, moreover, that it is to the crown the commons are indebted for being introduced into a share of the legislature, and so made partakers in the functions of the constitution with the great landholders.



You, Sir, may assert, and explain, and refine, as long as you please ; but this fact is so imprinted in the pages of our history, that you never can obliterate it. Mr. Burke is therefore founded in what he says of the crown being the origin and basis of the democratic part of our constitution ; and what you allege of the British constitution being founded *on the free will and consent of a free people*, is no otherwise true, than it is of the governments of Turkey or of Russia ; *they* may as well be said to be so founded ; for if the people, who are every-where more numerous and strong than the government, do not rise in a body to destroy those governments (which they certainly could, if they pleased), what right have you to say, that the constitution of those countries is not founded on their free will and consent ? I am sure there was no other free will and consent to support the English



lish constitution before the existence of the house of commons, nor for many years after; since that house has exercised the functions of speaking upon state affairs, this *free will and consent* has been more frequently signified by the members of it in the name of the people; and the people have within this last year plainly declared, they wish no other mode of signifying their *free will and consent*, than this parliamentary mode.

The people, therefore, are in the same mind as their ancestors: They reject the proffer made by those who flatter them with a power to exercise, themselves in person, *a sovereign will*, which they have bound themselves and their heirs to exercise only by their representatives in parliament. They are men, who think it more prudent, as well as honest, to adhere to a compact that has been made and acted under for centuries, than to  
new-

new-settle the family concerns, merely to gratify a novice of a conveyancer, who thinks he can dispose of them in a more learned and scientific manner. What they have seen and felt, they know ; but what is to arise from reasoning and speculation, may end in disappointment. Nobody knows better than yourself, how slippery words are. You give an instance of this in p. 23. where, in your zeal for this *free will and consent of the NATION*, you tell us, that “ it is high  
 “ treason, by the 4th of Anne, to  
 “ maintain and affirm, by writing or  
 “ printing, that *the nation* cannot limit  
 “ the crown, the descent, inheritance,  
 “ and government thereof, as it shall  
 “ please.” But when we turn to chapter and verse, it seems you only mean what is enacted by stat. 6 Anne, c. 7. s. 1. where it is made high treason to maintain or affirm, that the *kings*, or *queens*, of this realm, with  
 and

*and by the authority of* PARLIAMENT, are not able to make laws and statutes for the above purposes. It is not therefore the will of the *nation*, but of the *king and parliament*, that is here recognized.

This was a sad slip for you to make, who are, in the first place, a lawyer; secondly, a conveyancer, who should deal out his words with precision; thirdly, an historian. But all these obligations to fidelity and truth give way to another character, which has the ascendancy at present—that of a politician. I always suspect what comes from persons of that stamp; and I did not think you intitled to any exception, notwithstanding the following protestation in p. 6. “ I  
 “ shall speak to you without reserve  
 “ or fear, because I pledge to you my  
 “ *honour and credit* for saying nothing  
 “ which the constitution *and laws* of  
 “ my country do not justify and en-  
 “ force.”

“force.” Since these pledges are forfeited, what do you propose to deposit as a security to the people of Great Britain, when you make your next *Friendly and Constitutional Address*?

Such is the credit you deserve for facts; let us now see the closeness of your reasoning. As a specimen of this, I shall produce a conclusion which you make from a very sensible reflection of Bishop Horsley. In p. 30. you say, We, my countrymen, who see every act of sovereignty as direct emanations from the free will and consent of a free people, never can so debase ourselves, as to submit to the doctrine of this reverend prelate, *that in governments which are the worst administered, the sovereign power for the most part is a terror not to good works, but to evil; and, upon the whole, far more beneficial than detrimental to the subject.* And then you go on to make  
this



this inference: "The worse there-  
" fore King James's government was  
" administered, the more beneficial  
" was it to the subject, and was there-  
" fore to be submitted to, and not  
" resisted."

Surely no man, but yourself, could extract such a meaning from these words. The Bishop says, the worst governments have more good than bad in them: You make him say, the worse governments are, the more beneficial are they to the subject. By the same sort of reasoning, if I said, the worst book you wrote has some sense in it, you might conclude, "the more nonsense I write, so much the better."

In short, the whole that you say upon *the consent and will* of the people, in the sense in which you understand them, is false in fact, and in reasoning. Without entering into that subject any further, I will only recom-

mend you to consider, whether, by *the people*, you can with decency pretend to mean any other, than the small-minority of discontented persons with whom you mostly converse? And whether the whole of your two books does not proceed upon a supposition, that the *majority* of the people have declared themselves against you and your reforming friends? And, therefore, whether it is not very ill-timed for *you* to preach up the sovereign will of the people?

What you say of Mr. Reeves and the Association, is little more than a repetition of what you had before attempted in your History. You again go over the story of Thomas Bull, and Soame Jennings, the divine right of kings, and the purity of the house of commons, without any novelty or additional force. I have already given these a complete answer; and as you seem to like repetitions, you may turn back,

back, and read it over again. I will only remind you, that you are wrong in alleging, that the Association at the Crown and Anchor was formed *for the general purpose of prosecuting their fellow-citizens* ; at least, I find no such purpose declared in any part of their proceedings ; nor have I heard of any persons prosecuted by them, or by their means.

You may make yourself quite easy about the dangers to which you think the constitution exposed by the solicitude of the Associators to preserve it : The fear that they will run into absolute monarchy, as a security against republicanism, and that they are attempting to throw down *the sacred fences, and expose the democratical part of the constitution to invasions and incroachments* (p. 19 ), is a groundless alarm, and ought not to fall upon a man who had the constancy to despise dangers of an opposite sort,



and thought it so criminal in the Associators to countenance the belief of them. Besides, if it was *calumny*, as you say (after Mr. Fox), p. 51. against the people of Great Britain, *to tax them with sedition*; will the people of Great Britain think it very FRIENDLY in you to charge them, in this Address, with the wicked intention to overturn the constitution, and subvert, instead of preserving, the liberties of their country? And when we consider, that the Associators were the majority of the kingdom, methinks, for a patriot, you treat *the sovereign will of the people* with too little ceremony, when it does not happen to conform exactly to your *own will* and opinions, which you still mean should have the ascendancy.

You, Sir, are the calumniator, when you ascribe to the great body of Associators, who make nine-tenths of the united kingdom, any other intention  
that



than the very best towards the country and the constitution; and when you allege, that *some secret domestic purposes*, inimical to the liberties of the country, are the *real* objects of the ministers in carrying on the war. (p. 51.) If you believe these plots for establishing absolute power, I can only say, that such an imagination may, in my opinion, very well find a place in a mind, that would not receive the belief of plots for setting up a republic, and levelling all distinctions. There is nothing more credulous than infidelity; to avoid believing one thing that is not demonstrated, such persons will swallow twenty things much more improbable: The belief of some people is all on one side.

You have on this occasion made a short turn, which is a strong trait of Jacobinism. When we complained, with truth, of discontent fomented in  
 1 this

this country by French emissaries, then did Barrere accuse our government with similar treachery, and caused letters to be forged as evidence of it: When the French government were committing cruelties, unheard of in any nation, whether savage or civilized, Barrere charged Lord Hood with torturing and hanging prisoners at Toulon: While the Jacobins were plotting to destroy the kingly government, they raised a cry against a supposed Austrian Committee: A Jacobin, when he is meditating some blow, contrives by falsehood, or forgery, to raise a clamour, and draw off the attention of the public from his designs.

You are endeavouring to draw off the public attention from demoeratical plots, by charging Mr. Burke and the Associators with *a confederacy to bring about a change in the government.*— (p. 29. 37. 39, 40.) But nobody will believe this, because you say it, any  
more

more than that *we forced the French to make war against us, and our allies the Dutch.* (p. 45.) This is another Jacobinical feint; but neither of these will serve beyond the compass of your own Society, where every thing shapeless and monstrous finds reception.

But I have already bestowed more attention on both your new performances, than the Public think either of them deserves; and therefore shall take my leave of you for the present.

AN ASSOCIATOR.

March 7, 1794.

THE END.